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FIERCELY INDEPENDENT



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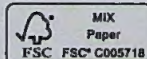
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fighting terror with torture

"Torture is treated like a homeopathic technique: a little violence used against violence might cure violence." — VIJAY PRASHAD

By the time the Canadian Press revealed last February that Public Safety Minister Vic Toews had quietly overturned a policy preventing security agencies from using or sharing information extracted through torture, the Canadian state's readiness to reconsider the torture taboo was already well-established.

"Terrorism is the top national security priority of the government," explained Toews' directive to CSIS, the RCMP, and Border Services (CBSA). In "exceptional circumstances," the directive read, security agencies may need to share or act on "intelligence provided by foreign agencies that may have been derived from the use of torture."

It couldn't have been news to Ottawa engineer Abdullah Almalki, who was labelled an "imminent threat" by Canadian security agencies in 2001 and tortured for two years in Syrian detention, with the RCMP providing questions to proxy Syrian interrogators. He was later cleared of all charges. Together with fellow Canadian citizens Ahmad El Maati and Muayyed Nurredin, also tortured in Syrian jails with the go-ahead from Canadian security agencies, and Abousfian Abdelrazik, similarly tortured in Sudan, Almalki has yet to receive the cold comfort of a forced apology like that extended to Maher Arar.

In addition to Canada's practice of "extraordinary rendition," a euphemism for subcontracting human rights abuses to foreign torturers and reaping the (mostly unreliable) intelligence, Canada has been censured by the UN Committee Against Torture for its continued detention of three Muslim men under security certificates for more than a decade, based on secret evidence reportedly obtained through torture.

Equally afoul of international law is Canada's transfer of Afghan prisoners to local authorities in Kandahar, where they were sure to be tortured. "Many were just local people: farmers, truck drivers, tailors, peasants," explained Richard Colvin, the second-ranked Canadian diplomat in Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007, of those tortured with electricity, extreme temperatures, knives, open flames, and sexual abuse. They were "random human beings in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Canada's willingness – under both Liberal and Conservative governments – to transgress the long-standing torture taboo

comes despite exhaustive evidence that torture doesn't actually work. The ostensible premise, "take terrorists, add torture, get truthful information, enjoy security," as summarized by sociologist Lisa Hajjar, "reflects a blithe disregard for the opinions of experts in interrogation."

The spectre of "mass death" evoked by Toews in Parliament to shame and silence those who indulge in "dithering in the face of threats to the lives of Canadians" conjures the now tired trope of the ticking bomb popularized by infamous apologist for American empire Alan Dershowitz in arguing for "torture warrants." But as Baijayanta Mukhopadhyay argues in the cover story of this issue, the purpose of the hypothetical ticking bomb scenario "is not the answer, but the question itself: it instils fear. What torture does do is frighten people into submission."

As Fathima Cader writes in the following pages, torture does not just discipline the tortured. Ubiquitous images of bound, hooded men kneeling in orange prison jumpsuits, or the photographs of Abu Ghraib branded into our collective consciousness, serve as pervasive reminders for those communities deemed torturable "of the violence with which they are uniquely threatened."

The shift in modern warfare toward counterinsurgency carried out by states against diffuse populations, rather than organized armies, calls for new instruments of domination. As a technique of imperial policing and pacification, as a spectacle of violence to produce compliant subjects, torture is very much on the table. Canada's expanding role as an imperial power, described by Isabeau Doucet and Justin Podur in this issue, is predictably commensurate with a growing investment in torture.

While the "exceptional circumstances" under which Toews has authorized torture-tainted information are rather opaque, the prohibition of torture under international law is unambiguous. According to the United Nations Convention Against Torture, "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever may be invoked to justify torture, including war, threat of war, internal political instability, public emergency, terrorist acts, violent crime, or any form of armed conflict."

Torture is not a remedy for violence; rather, it is the disease. Its lasting scars mark the tortured and torturer alike. And those who allow it to happen won't be left unscathed.

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Lauren Simkin Berke is a Brooklyn-based artist and illustrator whose work can be seen in galleries and publications worldwide. Working in two layers, Berke's work explores instinctive colour play and drawn images that study human gesture and how people document their lives with photographs.

Fathima Cader is a writer and photographer. She holds a degree in law and runs an online design studio, likethewind designs.

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Peter Hopperton lives between the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario, by the marshy waters of Cootes Paradise where he imagines the oak savannahs someday reclaiming downtown Hamilton.

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An immigrant who made Montreal home, **Baijayanta Mukhopadhyay** is currently a resident in rural family medicine in northern Ontario. He is an organizer with the Canadian chapter of the People's Health Movement, and is a co-representative for the North America region on its global steering council.

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Amanda Strong is a Toronto-based artist and filmmaker. She recently had her first film premiere at imagineNATIVE.

Xero became an activist when she realized that art is a capitalist venture run by (and for) elites.



Doucet



Mukhopadhyay



Gereaux

Strike action gets the goods

THE AUTHORS OF "From the classroom to the boardroom" in the fine September/October 2012 issue gave readers an interesting take on Quebec student militancy from their particular perspective, as of late spring 2012.

They argued for raising the level of struggle and extending it beyond the campuses in order to win. I think what the Red Square movement shows us is that today even massive demos, protests, and disruptive actions often aren't enough to force a determined government to back down from implementing neoliberal measures it views as politically important.

What could well have defeated the Liberals back in late spring was if the remarkable level of popular support for the student movement had been expressed not just in casseroles but also in political strikes.

After Law 78 was passed, discussion of solidarity action spread among union activists. A number of federations affiliated with the Confederation of National Trade Unions passed motions in favour of a day of strike action, to the consternation of its top officials. Unfortunately, the labour left was much too weak to be able to translate that sentiment into action.

Whether a new activist left can be organized within unions in the coming years will be of major importance for the prospects of successful fightbacks against austerity.

DAVID CAMFIELD
Winnipeg, MB

A larger picture

THE FINANCIAL issues presented in Enda Brophy's "The combustible campus" (September/October 2012) may be one of the core issues we face, especially as student debt continues to get more coverage as the next bubble to burst. However, it's good to see Brophy

frame debt and finances as part of a larger picture of global social inequality and injustice. Thanks!

Douglas Carl
Belize/St. Petersburg

Cross-border issue

THE RESOURCE extraction on traditional Indigenous territories that Sandra Cuffe discusses in "Trespassers on their own land?" (November/December 2012) is a serious issue in many ways. Just over the border on my ancestors' land, a gas company leased our land from other relatives since we refused to sign the lease. When we went there, a man with a rifle showed up. We were told he had the "legal right" to kill us since the land had been leased to the gas company.

Sadly there was nothing in the lease for cleanup, and now the land and the water running through it is toxic. There is no way to clean water once it's mixed with toxins.

Jackie Trotchie
Missoula, MT

Isn't it ironic?

I SHOULD ADD to Dave Bleakney's excellent article, "Conventions of labour" (November/December 2012), another detail about the recent Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) convention that illustrates how policy is decided.

A few years ago, the Manitoba NDP decided to break their 2007 campaign promise of extending the tuition freeze. In the midst of the predictable one-off student protests and a commission whipped up to justify the change in policy, a rather curious thing happened. The MFL brass, presumably at the request of the government, decided to change their policy on tuition fees to be in line with that of the provincial NDP government. A couple bigwigs got

together and wrote a report, which was adopted as MFL policy.

The MFL brass then started working in favour of tuition increases – organizing against the tuition freeze at the Manitoba NDP convention, for example.

Fast-forward to the 2012 convention. Some union locals, including my own, submitted several resolutions calling for a more progressive policy on post-secondary education. The stage was set for a little showdown.

The solution to this problem was to insert the report from a few years ago into everyone's kit to tell them what to think about tuition fees, to give nearly every resolution calling for a more progressive tuition fee policy non-concurrence just in case they didn't get the message, and to table any debate on these resolutions and send them to a committee to be reviewed. I suspect the brass feared that had there been a vote then and there, they might lose (most progressive-minded folks don't support tuition increases). It's hard to make a good argument for higher tuition fees at the mic at a labour convention, especially when the locals that represent university workers are opposed to tuition increases and fairly vocal about it.

It does seem somewhat ironic that if the convention is supposed to be the main-decision making body of the MFL, the most contentious resolutions (tuition fees and Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel) were sent off to some committee to be figured out.

Ironically, one of the stated reasons for trying to quash the BDS resolution was that it allegedly contradicted Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) policy (which is factually not true), yet, the CLC has a policy calling for free tuition that the MFL is apparently free to ignore.

BRIAN LATOUR
Winnipeg, MB

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Métis Métis

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DEFINING WHO IS MÉTIS

By Tara Gereaux

Illustration by Amanda Strong

The car engine hummed as I headed east on the Trans-Canada. It was late August, and the wind bashed against the car in waves. Always the wind on the prairie. And on that day, it made me feel energized, alive. On that day, I was driving back home to Regina, and I was driving back home a different person.

Earlier, I had been at the Métis Local #160 in Moose Jaw. I had sworn an oath, had my picture taken, and been registered as a Métis citizen. It was 2010, the Year of the Métis in Canada, and at 35, I had a new identity. As I rushed home in my car, I wondered what my life would be like from then on. I wondered who I was about to become. I sensed change, prickly and persistent. The highway stretched out long and far in front of me.

A few weeks later, my identification card arrived in the mail. I placed it in my wallet so that the edge that read *Métis Citizen* stuck out from the pocket that held it. And for a while, I felt satisfied. I had proof. But soon, that satisfaction faded and doubt took root. Was I Métis because a plastic card said I was? I ignored the doubt at first, but it burrowed in. Got stuck. Then I learned from census statistics that the fastest-growing population in Saskatchewan is the Métis population – it doubled between 1996 and 2006. This growth has been attributed in part to people discovering their Métis heritage after a time in which it had been buried or forgotten, when racism and assimilation efforts made it shameful, and even dangerous, to self-identify.

I will never know exactly why and when my own family's Métis history was buried; I only know that it was. I grew up in the Qu'Appelle Valley, a place with a long history of Métis settlement, but I had never even heard the term Métis as a child. It wasn't until I was an adult and my mother was given a binder of historical documentation from my great-uncle that I learned my ancestors were Métis. I thought about these census statistics, about all the people like me who had just discovered their history. Then I thought about all the people who have lived their entire lives as Métis. What do they think of people like me?

American scientist Geoffrey C. Bowker and sociologist Susan Leigh Star write that "to classify is human." And humans have a history of using written documentation, like identification cards, to do it. Other researchers have argued that identifying groups of people meets both practical and social needs – practical because it simplifies interactions with others, including governments, and social because it satisfies the need to belong. Sociologist Erving Goffman further explained that people use information about themselves as a form of self-expression that contributes to identity formation. Written documentation, therefore, contributes to a person's understanding of themselves. This made sense to me. But I began to realize that my own confusion and uneasiness regarding the Métis citizenship card in my possession stemmed from the fact that I didn't know anything about the group of people I was now supposed to belong to.

I started to attend Métis cultural events and social gatherings. I joined Métis community groups and started to learn what I could about the culture I now identified with. And as I began to meet and forge relationships with other Métis,

I discovered that many Métis, including Elders and leaders in the community, did not have Métis citizenship cards. Some even refused to apply for them.

"I've filled out the application," Ashley Norton says, "but I'm reluctant to send it in." Ashley is a founding member of the Wiichiwayshinaw Foundation, Michif for *we are helpers*, in Regina.

The organization was formed to empower, preserve, and develop Métis community and culture by providing educational workshops and scholarships, and hosting an annual awards celebration to acknowledge the achievements of Métis community members.

Part of what holds Ashley back from sending in her application is that she feels she doesn't need anyone to tell her she's Métis. But it's also her sense of loyalty to her family.

"I'm not sure the Norton side of my family would qualify," she explains. Her grandmother is Dene First Nation and her grandfather is English, and even though they live

**"I ignored the
doubt at first,
but it burrowed
in. Got stuck."**

traditional Métis lives and are accepted by the community, they don't have the genealogical connection to the Red River Settlement that the Métis Nation citizenship application requires.

The current Métis registry process, established in 2004, requires that applicants have an ancestral connection to the historic Métis homeland, which includes Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and parts of the

northern United States. It does not include Quebec, the Maritime provinces, or the vast majority of the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. Because the Norton side of Ashley's family are Dene and their traditional territory is in the North, they wouldn't qualify. The other side of her family does have ancestral connection to the historic Métis homeland, but Ashley still questions sending in her application.

Métis Scrip

THROUGHOUT THE late 19th century, colonial settlement of the West was of paramount importance for the newly confederated Canada. Attempts to dispossess the region's Indigenous peoples and clear land for European settlers were integral to this process. As opposed to the collective extinguishment of land title pursued through the treaty process, the Métis were dealt with on an individual basis. The Half-Breed Scrip, implemented from the 1870s through to the 1920s, was designed to extinguish Métis title by offering certificates redeemable for land or money (160 acres or \$160, or 240 acres or \$240, depending on the individual's age) in return for signed affidavits ostensibly relinquishing title. Scrip had to be redeemed at land titles offices that were hundreds of kilometres apart, necessitating several days of travel by each individual. Colonial authorities could allot the land anywhere in the province in which the scrip was issued, which forced many Métis individuals to relocate away from their families and ancestral territories. For this reason, some chose not to claim the allotted land at all. Many more were prevented from doing so by other factors: illiteracy; the flawed, confusing nature of the application process; long delays that left claimants in limbo; financial limitations that made it impossible for many Métis to meet Dominion Lands Act obligations; and the government's failure to protect the process from fraud and unscrupulous land speculators.

"Although the government went through the motions of ensuring that everything was legal, its real objectives were not to protect the interests of the native people, but to get their land away from them in a way that was expedient, which cost the government little, and which would stand up in a British Law Court ... [S]uch action would create a cheap and surplus supply of labour necessary for development activities such as the construction of the railway ... One can only conclude that where the government was concerned with issues such as economics, settlement and development, these considerations took precedence over ethics and morality." — Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan

Source: Our Legacy (http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_scrip).

Tammy Vallee, a genealogist who works at Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, the governing organization for Saskatchewan's Métis citizens and the organization responsible for the province's Métis registry, says the identification cards are separate from identity.

"It's not our job to say someone's not Métis," she says. "We just say that we can't give them a card." Tammy emphasizes that the process is not meant to infringe on how people define themselves. "Identity is identity, and we don't want to take that away from anyone."

In a way, this makes sense, but it's cold comfort for Ashley, whose family ties are strong. "If my whole family can't register, why should I?"

Allen Parenteau also hasn't registered out of loyalty to his family. Allen is a community leader and an instructor at a Métis educational institute. Because of the institute's ties to the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, he asked for a pseudonym. Allen's family does come from the Métis homeland; however, he feels the registration process is too complicated for the Elders, and if they can't register, he won't either. "Until the process is made easier for them, I can't. I'd feel almost as if I was betraying them."

But he still sees the need for a registry. "Don't get me wrong. Counting us is a good thing because you can't have

The current process is cumbersome, invasive, and degrading.

a discussion around rights until you know how many of us there are. And I advocate for the registry in my classes. It's important. But the registry process itself is what I have issue with – it's a very white, bureaucratic process. It's as if a white judge has come along and said, 'I know what's good for you.'"

In many ways, Allen's correct. The current registry process stems from the 2003 Powley case in which the Supreme Court of Canada determined that the Métis possess an Aboriginal right to hunt. Aboriginal rights refer to the traditions, practices, and customs unique to each Aboriginal group that ensured their survival, including the right to hunt, fish, trap, and gather. They also include language rights, the right to exercise Aboriginal religions and culture, to self-government, and to benefit economically from the lands on which Aboriginal peoples were historically dependent.

In *R. v. Powley*, the Supreme Court of Canada also determined that the term Métis "refers to distinctive peoples who ... developed their own customs, and recognizable

group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears." But while this ruling resolved the Powley case, it raised another question: who is Métis? While individual Métis locals (organizations for specific communities, similar to constituencies) and provincial Métis offices kept membership registries over the decades, there had never been a single membership registration process for all Métis, regardless of local or province. After the Powley case, and with funding from the federal government, the Métis National Council and its five member organizations in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario developed a new registration system and began to register Métis citizens in 2004.

Because funding is based on a court case, Tammy Vallee explains, the Métis Nation had to use a "legitimate process," one that would stand up in court. But there's something uncomfortable in this justification. The criteria to determine who is Métis was created for the courts – not for the Métis themselves. That's a huge concern for many in the community, and it's why Allen considers the registry a "voiceless process."

Jean Desjarlais, an Elder and respected Knowledge Keeper, echoes Allen's concerns for Métis Elders: "Older people don't have a clue how to start." She asked me not to use her real name because of her connections to the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan through the community and her professional life. She thinks the current process is cumbersome, invasive, and degrading. Plus, she says, "I'm sick and tired of having to prove that I'm a half-breed – I've got five cards now that say I'm a Métis person."

This is another issue many Métis people have with the registry process – there have been several other processes in the past, each one different from the other. Some Métis have a small collection of Métis Nation identification cards they've acquired through the years. I thought about that feeling I had when I had received mine and asked Jean if she remembered receiving her first one. She nodded. She was in her late teens.

"My mother came home from a meeting with cards for all of us. That's how easy it was then. She told me, 'They want to count us, and it might be important 50 years from now.'" But almost 50 years have passed since that time, and there are still new cards and still more counting.

Calvin Racette's concerns about the registry process run even deeper. Calvin is a Métis from the Qu'Appelle Valley and works as an Aboriginal consultant for Regina Public Schools. He grew up very proud of his Métis heritage and became involved in the Métis Society of Saskatchewan (now defunct) and worked for many years at the Gabriel Dumont Institute, which is dedicated to renewing and developing Métis culture. Throughout his years at those organizations, he was involved in researching Métis history, and he began to see how the definition of Métis changed over the years.

"In the beginning, it meant you had a white father and an Indian mother. Then in 1938 in Alberta, they developed a different definition with the Métis Population Betterment Act. In the '60s, '70s, and '80s, there was the north-south split, and eventually the Red River Settlement idea came into being. But that's left the northern Métis out."

Seeing how the identification criteria has morphed and evolved over time has left Calvin feeling uncomfortable. He recognizes the political nature of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan and believes that the decisions the organization made were about power and control, not right and wrong. Now, he refuses to get a card. He doesn't want any identification or label attached to him.

"I call myself brown. Métis, First Nations, Aboriginal – those are all political terms created by government," he says. "I don't need a stamp on my ass to tell me who I am. Besides, identity doesn't come from a political structure; it comes from the heart."

His comment resonated with me. It occurred to me that Calvin had hit on the real problem I was struggling with – I had looked to something external for validation. In that moment, I felt silly. Ashamed, even. And those feelings worsened the more I researched and learned about the complicated colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state. I realized that the Métis Nation registry is still colonial at its roots. Glen Coulthard, a contemporary scholar of Indigenous politics, working from and expanding on philosopher Frantz Fanon's work, suggests that when identity-based movements seek state recognition, such as the Métis Nation citizenship cards, they are giving power to the colonizer. In other words, by seeking recognition as Métis citizens from the courts – a colonial institution – the colonial relationship is maintained. This information was, and still is, difficult to process. I've thought about cutting up my card, denouncing it. But something won't let me.

Over two years have passed since I first received my Métis citizenship card. I still struggle with the decision I made, but I have found some comfort. Frantz Fanon argued that the pathway to true self-determination lies in personal and collective self-affirmation. It's a self-initiating process. During these past two years, I've gained knowledge about our country's history and my own history, I've become involved in the Métis community, and, most importantly, I've developed new relationships. These are the things helping me to discover my Métis-ness. Not the card. While I recognize that the Métis Nation registry process is flawed and complicated, I absolutely do not regret registering. I know this is contradictory, and it's hard to reconcile. But personally, I have to honour my citizenship card because there's a journey behind it. A journey I'm still on. One that's leading me to a new way of being in the world. ⑥

"I don't need a stamp on my ass to tell me who I am."



KILLERS IN HIGH PLACES

Drugs, gangs, and Harper's war on the poor

By Dave Oswald Mitchell

Illustration by Jesse Purcell

"I can't run no more with that lawless crowd while the killers in high places say their prayers out loud." — LEONARD COHEN, "ANTHEM"

When 27-year-old Daniel Davis was gunned down by a gang member in Scarborough in July 2012, Toronto Mayor Rob Ford announced it was "time to declare war" on gangs. The *Toronto Sun's* Farzana Hassan took the rhetoric one step further, calling for a "war on drugs" involving "longer prison terms and larger fines" for drug dealing and possession, as well as racial profiling of "certain communities [who] are more prone to drug violence and gang activity."

Hassan needn't have bothered: the approach she called for is exactly the one the federal government has been actively pursuing since Stephen Harper's Conservatives first formed government in 2006. But is targeting the mostly poor, mostly racialized youth who constitute the multi-billion-dollar drug trade's foot soldiers really the solution to such violence? What of the middle-class kids and other recreational drug users who constitute the majority of the drug trade's consumers, the bankers who launder its profits, or the politicians who exploit it for political gain?

Prohibition kills

Gun violence and killings linked to the drug trade are still a rare occurrence in Canada, relative to both the U.S. and Mexico. But it's the same war, the same drugs, and, with Harper's get-tough-on-crime-while-slashing-the-safety-net approach, we're entering the same world of pain as our neighbours to the south.

After 40 years and billions of dollars spent, the U.S. drug war has failed to reduce either drug use or drug production. It has funnelled vast amounts of cash and arms to criminal

gangs, security contractors, and police and military forces, and created the largest prison population in the world. More than 2.3 million people are currently behind bars in the U.S., and the number of them locked up for drug offences exceeds the country's entire prison population in 1980. Someone is arrested in the U.S. every 19 seconds on drug charges, almost half of them for simple marijuana possession.

The war on drugs can only be viewed as a failure if we take its ostensible goal at face value.

Meanwhile in Mexico, whose drug war is fought with American arms and measured in Mexican lives, an estimated 110,000 people have been murdered and 1.6 million more have been displaced by violence in the past six years of drug war escalation.

In both the U.S. and Mexico, by any reasonable measure, the war on drugs has been a disaster. Journalist John Gibler observes in his book *To Die in Mexico* that "the United States and Mexican governments continue spending billions of dollars on police and military campaigns that have no rival in history in terms of their absolute failure." But this begs the question: *a failure for whom?* Canadian journalist Dawn Paley suggests in her article "Drug War Capitalism" that the war on drugs can only be viewed as a failure if we take its ostensible goal at face value. If, instead, the drug war is understood as a calculated, colossal investment in brutal new strategies of social and territorial control, capital accumulation, and militarization, then we must begin to measure it by a different yardstick.

Stateside, civil rights legal scholar Michelle Alexander has argued that the drug war has served as a highly successful Republican divide-and-conquer tactic for manipulating white voters while disenfranchising, on a massive scale, black



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ones. In her book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Alexander compares it to the racial segregation regime that ruled the American South from the Civil War to the civil rights movement. "Mass incarceration in the United States [has] emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow," she argues. Alexander points out that the U.S. prison population has risen dramatically since the drug war began in earnest in the early 1980s, and this mass incarceration has overwhelmingly targeted people of colour, who constitute 70 per cent of the U.S. prison population.

The war on drugs has served the same ends of social control in Mexico, decimating communities that present an obstacle to making the country safe for capital. This is particularly true since President Felipe Calderón came to power in 2006 by a razor-thin victory, marred by massive fraud, in a moment of widespread social unrest.

One of Calderón's first acts was to deploy the armed forces on Mexican streets, leading to a massive spike in deaths linked to narcotrafficking. The result has been a terrifying climate of impunity in which 95 per cent of deaths linked by officials to gang activity go uninvestigated, while 98 per cent of all reported crimes are never solved. Amnesty

If the drug war is a tool of social and territorial control and capital accumulation, it's not enough to simply accuse Harper's Conservatives of pursuing a misguided strategy.

International reports that torture by Mexican military and police is widespread, and has risen every year since the U.S. began training Mexican forces in counter-narcotics efforts as part of the Merida Initiative, a bilateral "security cooperation agreement," in 2008.

State forces and drug cartels, both ruling by force and fear, increasingly come to resemble one another. And human rights defenders, journalists, union leaders, Indigenous activists, and others who stand in the way of profit and power all become targets. In December 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported that Mexican authorities had contracted criminal organizations to kill activists and human rights defenders. The human rights organization *Comité Cerezo*, itself under accompaniment protection because of death threats it has received, has documented a significant rise in politically motivated disappearances and extrajudicial executions by state-connected agents since the launch of the U.S.-funded Merida Initiative in 2008.

This is no coincidence. Indeed, it cuts right to the heart of why the drug war continues to drive U.S. policy in the Americas even as the states of Colorado and Washington have voted in favour of decriminalization. As Gian Carlo Delgado-Ramos and Silvina María Romano suggest in a 2011 article in *Latin American Perspectives*, rising insecurity and violence suit U.S. interests perfectly, serving to foster "a complex balance between stability and instability that maintains the region's overall dependence and, therefore, its status as a source of U.S. wealth and power."

Harper's war

Globally, a growing chorus of voices is calling for an end to prohibition and a shift to treating addiction as a health issue rather than a criminal one. In an open letter to Prime Minister Harper, the Global Commission on Drug Policy – which includes former Canadian Supreme Court judge Louise Arbour, former presidents of Brazil and Switzerland, and businessman Richard Branson – called Canada's move to further criminalize marijuana in the midst of a global shift in the opposite direction, "very weird." "Canada is at the threshold of continuing to repeat the same grave mistakes as other countries," the letter reads, "moving further down a path that has proven immensely destructive and ineffective at meeting its objectives."

Reviewing Stephen Harper's domestic and foreign policies, it's hard not to conclude that the Conservative government is seeking, 40 years later, to replicate wholesale the U.S. strategy both at home and abroad – using the

drug war as a pretext to criminalize poverty at home while projecting military power to advance the nation's economic interests abroad.

Domestically, Harper has pushed through harsher and mandatory minimum sentences for activities related to narcotics production, trafficking, and the gang activity it breeds, while cutting funding for social services, harm reduction, and rehabilitation programs proven to treat addiction and reduce rates of recidivism. Gang membership in prisons has jumped 44 per cent in the past five years, and prison officials are reporting increased prison violence due to overcrowding and increased use of force to quell it. Since the passage of Harper's latest crime bill in March 2012, provinces are bracing for a massive spike in already overcrowded prison populations. The Canadian Bar Association is predicting greater backlogs in the legal system, and the prison guards' union is warning of "dramatic" growth in mental health issues among prisoners. Criminologist Justin Piché recently told *The Dominion*: "The

provinces and territories have built or are in the process of building 22 new prisons and 17 additions to existing facilities since 2008 that added over 6,000 new prison beds at a construction cost of nearly \$3 billion."

In 2007, Craig Jones, then director of the John Howard Society, predicted that Harper's first crime bill would hit marginalized populations hardest. "Police go where the pick-

Drugs are big business, and those making a killing are not the targets of your average drug sting.

ings are easiest. It will fall disproportionately on marginalized, mentally ill, and minority youth." Jones was right. Scott Bernstein and Laura Drake point out in a recent *National Post* op-ed that "nearly all the population growth in Canada's prisons over the last decade has been drawn from aboriginal people, visible minorities, people struggling with addictions, and the mentally ill . . . The new sentencing regime for our drug laws will incarcerate even more people from these groups without any regard for their already-disadvantaged position in society."

Indigenous people will be particularly hard hit. According to an October 2012 report by the UN committee on the rights of the child, Indigenous men in Canada are more likely to go to jail than graduate high school. Indigenous people in Canada make up only four per cent of the population but 22 per cent of the prison population. The same UN report slams Harper's 2012 omnibus crime bill as being "excessively punitive for children and not sufficiently restorative in nature," specifically expressing concern at the overrepresentation of Indigenous and black children in the justice system and identifying "serious and widespread discrimination" in services for Aboriginal children, visible minorities, immigrants, and children with disabilities.

Internationally, Harper has positioned Canada as a junior partner in the U.S. drug war on Latin America. Canada wages this war for the same reason the U.S. does: to defend and extend its economic interests in the hemisphere. Stephen Harper himself pointed out while speaking in Colombia in April 2012 that "Canada has more trade agreements in this hemisphere than with the rest of the world combined." Canada's dominance in the mining sector is particularly pronounced. Home to 70 per cent of the world's mining companies, Canada dominates the industry throughout the hemisphere.

Canada's involvement in the drug war has included sending RCMP officers to train Mexican police forces, deploying coast guard ships to participate in drug interdiction efforts in the Caribbean, and establishing a military "operations

hub" in Jamaica "for future operations in the Caribbean." In April 2012, Harper pledged \$25 million over five years to the Canada Initiative for Security in Central America to go toward projects designed "to enhance security and the rule of law and to address issues related to transnational criminal activity in the Americas." This includes partnering with the government of Colombia "to help strengthen law enforcement systems in Honduras and Guatemala" – hardly three countries exemplary for their safeguarding of human rights.

This funding has thus far received little scrutiny. But we know that similar projects training Mexican forces through the Merida Initiative have coincided, as Comité Cerezo told a Witness for Peace delegation in September 2012, with a spike in torture, abuse, killings, and disappearance of human rights defenders. The same measures are now being replicated in Central America, and Canada is an active participant.

Endgame

Globally, the trade in illicit drugs is worth an estimated \$600 billion annually – roughly a third of the entire GDP of Canada. Drugs are big business, and those making a killing are not the targets of your average drug sting. A comprehensive study of the Colombian drug trade found that a whopping 97.4 per cent of the profits of the Colombian drug trade ends up in First World banks, laundered by First World criminal syndicates. And yet, in spite of a series of revelations of bank malfeasance in the handling of suspected drug money, no North American banker has yet gone to jail in the war on drugs.

If the drug war is a tool of social and territorial control and capital accumulation, it's not enough to simply accuse Harper's Conservatives of pursuing a misguided strategy. The killers in high places know the consequences of their actions, at home and abroad. Prohibition must end, accompanied by a shift to restorative justice, not retribution; treating addiction as a health issue, not a crime; and an end to Canadian military and financial interventions in the service of resource extraction and finance capital.

The drug war is the endgame of neoliberal capitalism. A self-fulfilling prophecy for right-wing social policy, and a windfall for military and police forces and the banking industry, the drug war is, in essence, the "shock doctrine" writ small. It is responsible for daily acts of spectacular violence that breed fear and increase the power of armed actors, legal and illegal, so as to facilitate the control of marginalized and rebellious populations within and beyond imperialist centres. Social movements across North America and beyond, which are already fighting the fallout from this war on so many fronts, must join forces to end it. **b**

When a Bone Breaks

Doctors, torture, and national insecurity

By Baijayanta Mukhopadhyay

Illustrations by Lauren Simkin Berke



Middle-aged woman. Ingrown toenail that has persisted, resistant to all conservative measures. Medications: ramipril and atorvastatin. Allergies: topical anaesthetics.

"It's going to be very painful without the anaesthetic in your toe." My face twists in anticipation. "Maybe we could give you something to relax a little, send you off to sleep." Those drugs can, however, cause people to stop breathing, so we would need to be prepared with heart monitors. The effects would probably last considerably longer than the procedure itself, but we use such medications routinely to set broken

bones – another excruciating process.

The woman shakes her head as I run through the risks. "Just take it out. It won't take long, right? I'll deal."

"I really don't think ..." I look doubtfully at my supervisor. He sighs resignedly and pulls on gloves. I step back.

He grabs with the forceps, and yanks.

Once. The woman shrieks, trying to muffle her screams with her hands.

Twice. The emergency room around us falls silent as her cries resound.

Thrice. Her body shudders into sobs. The nail is out.

It was medical school that introduced me to torture.



"Physicians are no more or less moral than other people. But as heirs to shamans and witch doctors, we may be seen by others — and sometimes by ourselves — as possessing special magic in connection with life and death. Various regimes have sought to harness that magic to their own despotic ends. Physicians have served as actual torturers in Chile and elsewhere; have surgically removed ears as punishment for desertion in Saddam Hussein's Iraq; have incarcerated political dissenters in mental hospitals, notably in the Soviet Union; have, as whites in South Africa, falsified medical reports on blacks who were tortured or killed; and have, as Americans associated with the Central Intelligence Agency, conducted harmful, sometimes fatal, experiments involving drugs and mind control."

— Robert Jay Lifton, M.D., from "Doctors and Torture," *New England Journal of Medicine*

We decide who we are as a society by deciding whom we exclude, whom we banish outside our circle of ethical care. A measure of human progress is how much more we can expand our embrace of beings worthy of dignity.

In the summer of 2011, Vic Toews discreetly gave all federal security agencies – the Canadian Border Services Agency, the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police – permission to use information that may have been gathered through torture in their investigations. Canadian agencies were previously barred from using such information, as giving torture any legitimacy ran afoul of the spirit of international law. Canadian agencies were also prohibited from sharing information abroad that could lead to the torture of individuals. Now, Canadian security agencies can also consider conveying data that may lead to torture in “rare circumstances, [where] ignoring such information solely because of its source would represent an unacceptable risk to public safety.”

Medicine has always been implicated in torture. As a physician, I often reflect that it requires sensitive knowledge of the body to know how far one can bend someone without breaking them, a deep intimacy with physiology to gauge how brittle a bone need be before it snaps from stress. Steven Miles, an American doctor who has done seminal work on the implication of physicians in torture in the national security complex of the United States, grimly notes in *Oath Betrayed* that, globally: “Twenty to fifty percent of torture survivors report that they saw physicians serving as active accomplices during the abuse. That statistic does not include

prisoners who never see the physician who falsifies medical records or death certificates so as to conceal torture. It does not count those who are victimized by techniques

that doctors and psychologists devised for torturers to use.”

Medicine makes torture banal. The body is compartmentalized easily enough, a human stripped of being becomes a technical system. Pain is not feeling, but electrochemical signalling. Screams are vibrations of vocal cords. Writhing is the contracture of muscles through the activation of calcium channels. Torture can integrate itself into the daily activities of physicians trying to work their way up the ladder, to make a decent living to feed a family, to do what is right.

The hierarchy of medicine facilitates a military mindset of following orders, as Shusaku Endo describes in his novel *The Sea and Poison*, which tells the story of how doctors become implicated in the live dissection of an American prisoner of war in Japan. A senior colleague tells an intern: “Doctors aren’t saints. They want to be successful. They want to become full professors. And when they want to try out new techniques, they don’t limit their experiments to monkeys and dogs.” And before we know it, we are standing scrubbed next to the body of a living, breathing person whom we are going to cut up alive, all in the name of science, all in the name of the nation, all in the name of us trying to hedge our bets to pick the winning side.

If someone refused to impart information they had on how to defuse the bomb that could kill your family, what would you do?

The ticking time bomb scenario. This hypothetical question is omnipresent, routinely posed by testosterone-laden hotheads at security agencies. The question itself insidiously insinuates that we are at eternal war, that this moral dilemma could strike at any moment, that there are those who perpetually plot against us. Would you not employ all the power at your disposal, your knowledge of anatomy and of physiology, of neurology and of psychology, of respirology and cardiology to extract the truth, that elusive truth, from someone who has no respect for your own life?

Much, of course, would depend on how we define truth. Many at security agencies seem to believe that any information is better than good information. But the legal weight of evidence derived from torture is well-known to be dubious at best. Most famously in recent Canadian history, Maher Arar was implicated by Omar Khadr, who stated during his detention – which included torture – that he “might have seen” Arar in Afghanistan. Khadr would probably have said anything to please his interrogators, provided any information that would give them an excuse to take their witch hunt elsewhere, to leave him in peace and pain-free. We know now that subsequent investigation cleared Arar of any wrongdoing.

If torture really had any value, history would be replete with examples of how it saved civilizations from destruction. If torture worked, Rome would not have fallen, the first French Republic would have been the last, and the Spanish empire would have extended itself into perpetuity. If torture worked, maybe Mubarak would still be president and Mandela never would have been.

Medicine has always been implicated in torture.

The public silence around Toews' shift in Canadian policy undoes decades of moral progress. We have accepted this reality, barely raised our voices, since time bombs may be tucked away in our offices, in our buses, in our closets. In the real world, we must make compromises, after all. In the interests of national security, we should prob-

National security is not our collective security.

ably concede to the decisions of men in dark suits in hidden hallways in Ottawa, as in Damascus. We should trust them to take care of us, for they know best, and maybe all our trust costs is a little of some stranger's dignity. So what?

But national security is not our collective security. Our collective security lies in protecting one another from authoritarian regimes that seek to repress, to entrench fear, to silence. That power is the real value of torture. It does not bring forward evidence of any judicial value. The purpose of the ticking time bomb scenario is not the answer, but the question itself: it instils fear. What torture does do is frighten people into submission. Torture silences those who question authority. And in our own silence, we are complicit in giving legitimacy to that oppression. National security is not for the nation at all, but for the interests of the few clinging to power. Their toenails intact.

In other ways, medicine has also taught me to bear witness to survival. Scars on skin on those who have fled violent repression, terror tattooed onto psyches. Physicians see torture's sequelae in intimate detail, and sometimes pay high costs in testifying to it. But our examination is limited at best. Time wipes away detail, as skin contracts and closes in, as minds make sense out of madness. All we can say is that a scar is *consistent*

with their account. We have no proof, we have no certainty, but we can say skin and story are *consistent* with someone who has been hurt, and then healed.

Our own healing as a profession since the assaults of fascism in the 1940s has not only led to an international framework that criminalizes torture, but also to the development of a body of medical ethics. The Australian and British medical associations' codes of ethics underline that physicians should not participate in torture or other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, with the British Medical Association stating in 1984, in a country then besieged by the IRA, that any diet given to detainees that required medical monitoring was inhumane and no doctor should be associated with it. The Canadian Medical Association has a policy resolution that states "that all physicians and medical associations should refuse to allow their professional or research skills to be used in any way for the purpose of torture or punishment of prisoners."

We decide who we are as a society by deciding whom we exclude, whom we banish outside our circle of ethical care. A measure of human progress is how much more we can expand our embrace of beings worthy of dignity. When we begin to make one exception here, one exception there, we not only hurt those involved, but we damage the society we claim to serve with universal, impartial consideration. As a self-regulating profession, physicians need to reiterate that we will not allow our members to participate in torture. Although there is no proof yet that there has been recent Canadian physician complicity with torture, now morally sanctioned by our government, we need to ensure that our members know that they will be held accountable for any future participation. Our patients deserve to know that we will not allow their bodies or their pain to be used to preserve the privilege of the powerful. Vic Toews knows that you are either with him or with the tortured. As physicians and as citizens, we need to state our choice. ⑥

TAKE ACTION!

1. Ask your doctor if they know the Canadian Medical Association's position on torture.
2. Write to Public Safety Minister Vic Toews.
3. Challenge your local media about its portrayal of the War on Terror.
4. Get involved with groups resisting national security measures or solidarity campaigns with Canadians who have survived torture. If there are no active campaigns in your community, start one! See, for example:

People's Commission Network (peoplescommission.org/en/)
 Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (ccvt.org)
 Support Mahjoub (supportmahjoub.org)
 Justice for Mohamed Harakat (justiceforhakat.com)
 Coalition Justice for Adil Charkaoui (adilinfo.org)
 Justice for Mahmoud Jaballah (justiceforjaballah.org)




A graphic narrative by Xero

The annual olive harvest is a key economic, social, and cultural event for Palestinians. The olive oil produced makes up 14% of agricultural income in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and helps support 80,000 families.



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Outsourcing Sovereignty

Haiti's New Dictatorship

An interview with Justin Podur

By Isabeau Doucet

Photos by Darren Ell

*A UN peacekeeper
guards a young
Haitian man during
an illegal arrest
operation, according
to a political prisoners'
collective in Haiti.
Port-au-Prince, 2008.*

During the buildup to and aftermath of the 2004 overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's popular priest-turned-president, two conflicting and contradictory narratives were being reported by the Haitian and international press. Even in the left-wing media office of ZNet, where Justin Podur was an editor, the stories filed from Haiti didn't add up.

"One is a story about a leader becoming a dictator and getting overthrown leaving a basket-case country in a basket-case condition. The second is the story of a popular movement being thwarted in its struggle for democracy and development and ending with a new dictatorship imposed upon it," writes Justin Podur, associate professor in environmental studies at York University, in his recently released book *Haiti's New Dictatorship: The Coup, the Earthquake and the UN Occupation (Between the Lines, 2012)*. In it, Podur documents the total subordination and outsourcing of a nation's sovereignty to a decentralized, multilateral, unaccountable network of foreign governments, international financial institutions, aid organizations, transnational investors, and the United Nations – all working in concert with local elites to rob Haiti of its hard-won democracy.

When did you decide you wanted to write *Haiti's New Dictatorship*?

I was a volunteer editor at ZNet at the time, as I still am now. I found that what seemed like a clear-cut case of a coup was generating a surprisingly divided response from progressive organizations, including those with operations on the ground in Haiti. I realized that in order to be a responsible editor I would have to study Haiti closely and understand the different claims and the evidence to support them. That led to wanting to go there and talk to people first-hand. I ended up keeping a long, running document of sources and evidence, a kind of ongoing chronology, that became the skeleton for the book.

In many ways, Haiti is an avant-garde microcosm of the privatization, deregulation, and loosening of state structures and protections that is happening everywhere. But in Haiti, the language of human rights, sustainable development, and humanitarian aid is co-opted to allow an ever-greater penetration and subordination of Haiti's economy to transnational capital. The new dictatorship in Haiti uses the language of human rights and frames almost everything it does in terms of charitable intervention, and then uses the media to astroturf that message. As you say in the book, who needs to muzzle the press if you can just outcompete them in PR and propaganda? How do you think we can learn to discern these sorts of events in real time?

While the rhetoric coming from different sectors has been very divided, the evidence has been solid throughout, especially on a quantitative basis. Part of the reason for the book is to document how the post-coup government was quantitatively worse than Aristide's government. And an important part of being able to understand current events is understanding the history.

Human rights are quantifiable, but often only after the fact, which makes the pre-emptive war doctrine so problematic. You call "responsibility to protect" the evolution of "white man's burden," which I thought was a good way of putting it.

It could be that human rights is not a robust enough concept to constrain powers from committing violations. One concept I don't think the pro-coup forces in Haiti can co-opt is the concept of sovereignty. This can inform how Haiti can

be helped today. An example: the immediate rescue operations after the earthquake in 2010 were hindered by an excessive emphasis on security for the foreigners who came to help – the U.S. Marines who focused on the protection of their forces, the NGOs who insisted on travelling with armed security. This wouldn't have happened if Haitians had

been in charge of the rescue operations themselves. Haitians aren't fed the same diet of racist stereotypes about Haitians, or about people of African descent, that Westerners are fed. These stereotypes have deadly consequences in high-stakes situations like the earthquake.

**Every country in Haiti
is there for its own
reasons. None of them
is there for Haiti.**

Responsibility to Protect?

By Anthony Fenton

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a new name for the old concept of humanitarian intervention, or humanitarian imperialism. For centuries, powerful states have reserved the "right" to intervene in – and thus undermine the sovereignty of – less powerful countries. Following the NATO invasion of Yugoslavia in 1999, which was described by the Independent International Commission on Kosovo as "illegal but legitimate" in a report presented to the United Nations, advocates of humanitarian intervention wished to lay the groundwork for future interventions to take place with perceived legitimacy and nominal legality, and without the encumbrance of UN Security Council delays or vetoes.

As an ostensibly non-imperial power, Canada stepped forward to spearhead the project in 2000. The Canadian government launched the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which, following global deliberations among legal, diplomatic, and academic elites, settled on the R2P concept. State sovereignty, considered an inalienable right since the 17th century, was turned on its head to become a responsibility. Failure to live up to it invited various forms of intervention, including military.

The launch of the R2P doctrine was sidetracked by the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing War on Terror. Between that time and 2005, the Canadian government took the lead on quietly selling R2P to the international community, with the eventual goal establishing R2P as a recognized principle in the UN system. The U.S. and U.K. invoked the theme of humanitarian intervention and R2P, *ex post facto*, to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Canadian officials did the same in 2004 to argue their case for helping overthrow the democratically elected government in Haiti.

Taking place largely outside of mainstream discussions, such warning signs of the potential implications of R2P – chiefly, that it may be used to justify intervention of the

overtly imperialist sort – were cast aside as Canadians focused instead on how R2P could help "prevent another Rwanda." At the 2005 UN summit, Canadian officials succeeded in getting R2P included in the world summit outcome document, laying the foundation for R2P as a new global norm.

With the (often messy, duplicitous, and arm-twisting) work of pushing R2P through the UN General Assembly done, and with a change of government in 2006, Canadians turned the advocacy of R2P over to private NGOs, U.S. philanthropic foundations, and sympathetic academics.

The administration of President Barack Obama includes numerous endorsers of R2P. Obama's explicit endorsement of R2P invited its invocation by the R2P lobby at the earliest occasion: the NATO invasion of Libya in 2011, which is considered the first successful "operationalization" of the R2P doctrine. Syria is high on the priority list of the R2P lobby for its next application. Meanwhile, events in Gaza have demonstrated the selective invocation of R2P against enemies of Western powers. During Operation Cast Lead, Israel's 2009 invasion of Gaza, R2P supporters like James Traub, spokesperson for the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, argued that it would be unwise to "belabour" Israel with an R2P invasion force to protect Palestinian civilians, for example, with a no-fly zone over Gaza. The exercise repeated itself in late 2012 during eight days of Israeli sorties that killed over 100 Palestinian civilians.

R2P's lobbyists, ever active in social media, email, and Internet campaigns, have largely fallen silent when it comes to Palestine. The R2P doctrine is equally absent on the matter of civilian protection from the ravages of private, capitalist accumulation. The global role of Canadian resource industries alone – with repeated violations of the spirit if not the letter of R2P – raises further critical questions regarding the utility of and true intentions behind this still emerging doctrine of humanitarian imperialism.





Haitian boys sit near Haitian SWAT soldiers who, along with MINUSTAH (UN forces), conduct an arrest operation in the Cite de Dieu neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince.

1492 1697 1791 1794 1804 1825 1915 1957 1971 1986 1990 1991 1993

Christopher Columbus writes that the people of what would later be called Haiti and the Dominican Republic gave the sailors gold with "such generosity of heart and such joy that it was wonderful." In the years that follow, hundreds of thousands of Indigenous people die in gold mines and from Spanish-borne diseases.

The colony of Haiti (then known as Saint-Domingue) earns the nickname "Pearl of the Antilles" due to the labour of an estimated 800,000 African slaves and the massive wealth generated for the French crown and French investors by sugar, coffee, and indigo exports.

Abolition of French colonial slavery.

A slave uprising begins in northern Saint-Domingue.

Saint-Domingue is renamed Haiti and declares itself independent from France.

France agrees to recognize Haitian independence in return for 150 million francs (later reduced to 90 million) as compensation for lost property.

The U.S. invades and occupies Haiti.

François Duvalier (Papa Doc) becomes president. Seven years later, he will declare himself president for life.

Papa Doc dies and is succeeded by his son Jean-Claude (Baby Doc).

Baby Doc is pushed out of Haiti by a popular uprising; General Henri Namphy takes power.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide is elected with 67% of the vote; his prime minister is René Préval.

General Raoul Cédras overthrows Aristide, who goes into exile. Over the next few years, several thousand of Aristide's supporters are killed.

The paramilitary death squad FRAPH is formed, led by Toto Constant and Louis-Jodel Chamblain.

TIMELINE ADAPTED FROM DAMMING THE FLOOD: HAITI, ARISTIDE AND THE POLITICS OF CONTAINMENT BY PETER HALLWARD, AND THE TORONTO HAITI ACTION COMMITTEE'S "HISTORY OF HAITI"

Does the concept of the new dictatorship apply elsewhere? Haiti's not an isolated case. Can you unpack it for us?

I think that somewhere out there there is a playbook for how to overthrow governments with multilateral coalitions and propaganda, but there are local differences. Huge numbers of people in Libya hated Gaddafi. Huge numbers of people in Syria hate Assad. This wasn't the case for Aristide. Small numbers of people in Haiti hated Aristide, and still do. But Aristide had no army, and the evidence of Aristide's human rights violations was not there. There is just no comparison between Aristide and these actual dictators.

But even in these cases – in Libya, or Iraq, or Afghanistan – it is hard to say that the situation is better after regime change. The regime change in Iraq came at the cost of a million Iraqi lives. The regime change in Afghanistan has led to 11 years of occupation, drones, and a resurgent Taliban. We don't even know what the results of the Libya regime change are going to be, but there is a lot of reason to be pessimistic.

The thing that seems unique about this new dictatorship, as opposed to traditional dictators like the ones recently toppled in the Middle East or Papa and Baby Doc Duvalier in Haiti, is you can pin the tens of thousands of deaths at the hands of their Macoutes [Duvalier-era paramilitary death squads] to a pretty clear chain of command. This new dictatorship is less centralized; it's totally diffuse and totally unaccountable. There's no way the International Criminal Court could indict anyone in MINUSTAH (the United Nations peacekeeping force brought in to replace U.S., Canadian, and French troops after the coup) for the summary executions, disappearances, or election manipulations all taking place on its watch. Even with all the evidence proving UN troops brought the cholera epidemic that has now killed thousands, no one has been held accountable, or even apologized.

Canadian peacekeeping, since its inception in the 1950s, has not been about keeping peace in the world but about keeping the peace between the great powers.

1994 1995 1996 2000 2001 2003 2004 2006 2010 2011 2012

Led by Aristide, Fanmi Lavalas is formed in opposition to the ex-Lavalas faction.

Ex-soldiers based in the Dominican Republic raid police stations and other government facilities, the first of many raids.

Preval wins presidential elections with 51% of the vote. A UN incursion into Cité Soleil leaves around a dozen residents dead; UN incursions continue into 2007.

Aristide returns to Haiti a second time. A presidential run-off election is held, and preliminary results declare singer Michel Martelly the winner. Fraud allegations force authorities to delay certifying results. Martelly is inaugurated as president.

Aristide disbands Haiti's army. Members of Plateforme Politique Lavalas win legislative elections. René Préval is elected with 88% of the vote.

Fanmi Lavalas wins landslide victories at all levels of government; opponents form Convergence Démocratique, a U.S.-backed coalition. In November, Aristide is re-elected with 92% of the vote.

Full-scale insurgency begins. Aristide is forced onto a U.S. jet and flown to the Central African Republic. U.S. troops occupy Haiti for a third time and an interim government is formed. *The Lancet* estimates thousands are killed by police and anti-Lavalas paramilitaries. The U.S.-led force is replaced by a UN stabilization mission.

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake leaves Port-au-Prince in ruins, leaving over 300,000 dead. A cholera epidemic begins to spread rapidly, killing 2,000 people in the first 30 days. Geneticists and epidemiologists later verify that the bacteria originated from a UN peacekeeping base. U.S.-backed elections, delayed by the earthquake, are held and deemed a massive fraud. Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council refused to allow candidates from over a dozen political parties, including Fanmi Lavalas.

Tropical storm Isaac kills at least 19 people. Flooding from Hurricane Sandy kills at least 54 people and leaves thousands homeless. Nearly 370,000 people still live in Internally Displaced Persons camps as a result of the 2010 earthquake.

Aristide asks France to repay the money it extorted from Haiti as compensation for lost colonial property.

U.S. soldiers occupy Haiti for the second time; Aristide returns from exile.



A simple sign lays in the street in Cité Soleil where the presence of UN troops, or MINUSTAH, has been controversial.

Cholera is a perfect example. When public health researchers like Rene Hendriksen closed the book on the case through a genome study, they were careful in stating that even though the evidence was clear that it was MINUSTAH that brought cholera to Haiti, no one in particular was to blame because the 7,500 deaths were inadvertent. This isn't false. But the fact that it is almost an inevitable consequence of the way Haiti is governed makes it *more* damning, not less, of this whole system that I'm calling Haiti's New Dictatorship.

How did the U.S. convince burgeoning democracies in Latin America to send their troops to Haiti?

Every country in Haiti is there for its own reasons. None of them is there for Haiti. Take Canada, for example. Canada's involvement in Haiti is a good example of Canadian peacekeeping. In 2004 there was a fallout between Canada, France, and the U.S. over their non-involvement in the 2003 Iraq War. Canadian peacekeeping, since its inception in the 1950s, has not been about keeping peace in the world but

about keeping peace between the great powers. During the Suez crisis, it was about keeping peace between the U.S. and the U.K. In 2004 it was about keeping the peace with an unhappy U.S. after their Iraq invasion. The same goes for other countries. Brazil wants to be a player on the world stage, and Haiti's an easy place to flex your muscles and practice counterinsurgency.

What do you think will be the most controversial aspect of your book?

I think the hardest thing to accept, for me, was that this is all being done by the United Nations. It's hard for people to digest that the UN could have done all this. When the U.S. supported the overthrow of Aristide in the 1990s, that was in line with what the U.S. has always done in Latin America, or what France has always done in Africa, so their participation in 2004 was less surprising. But the idea that the UN was running through neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince shooting up peoples' corrugated metal houses is harder to take. ⑥

amulet

for sister survivors

By Cynthia Dewi Oka

when time is army marshalled
against you starved and alone

I write in celebration your survival
each molecule of courage you collect
sunrise and sundown.

when you cannot move with the music
laughter blade in your belly

I write in celebration your strength
mourning self and body
no longer answering you.

when nobody holds you through
a thousand sleepless nights

I write to share my parts with you
take what you need to continue
let me kiss you where it hurts.

when you hate yourself for being
made of things softer than steel

I write to witness your rain
washing blood seeping stubborn
outside the neat confines of skin.

when you are asked to relive your war
so the privileged can get a concept

I write to be silent with you
reordering rooms in your heart
leaving the key in a moth's nest.

when others sweep your bones
feathers of good intentions

I write to build a wall with you
scratch poems in the dark
without ever seeing your hand.



when you are labelled self-destructive
instructed to get your shit together

I write to breathe chaos with body
you hurl hurricane speed at anything
solid, sharp and terrible.

when you encounter new intimacies
distrust your own judgment of safety

I write to push and run and hide
with you in the anonymity of libraries
the smell of a child's hair.

when memory burns a hole in your head
road to retribution is unfinished

I write to paint with you banners
in our blood match the beat
of your footsteps in march.

when language closes herself
to eloquence of your grief

I write to author with you
hammer for severing her
bondage to pleasant cruelties.

when the thought of being touched
gently makes you weep

I write to learn with you
how to accept love on your own
terms and in your own time.

when your body conceals herself
beneath rotting leaves and gasoline

I am still.

there are no promises
after rape we choose
the distance and measure of our lives

so I write to find
with you in the aching vastness
between our bones

holy things.

*Excerpted from Cynthia Dewi Oka's nomad of salt and hard water: poems
(Dinah Press, 2012) dinahpress.nfshost.com*

Reduced, Refused, Reignited

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

By Larissa Schneider

Illustration by Roxana Parsa



In 2006, the Conservative government cut the funding of Status of Women Canada (SWC) by 38 per cent, to the tune of \$5 million, in a move to enhance “fiscal responsibility.” Under the guise of fiscal restraint, Harper’s attack on SWC specifically targeted advocacy organizations, which were barred from applying for SWC grants in an attempt to stifle feminist research

and social movements. Without public funding, once-powerful voices leading the charge for women’s equality have virtually been silenced, forcing issues such as violence, poverty, and equity to the fringes of political discourse.

Although financially weakened, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) has responded to Harper’s anti-feminist

stance by developing new research partnerships. CRIAOW’s determination to produce feminist research and remain true to its mission amid new funding criteria has reignited the organization’s resolve to advance social justice and equality for all women.

Formed in 1976 by feminist academics, researchers, and community women, CRIAOW is the only non-profit,

bilingual research institute committed to amplifying the voices of women and making this research accessible for public advocacy and education.

CRIAW's main objectives include evaluating public policy and nurturing feminist researchers. Following the cuts, CRIAW has remained critical of the federal government, as evident in its publications that show a direct correlation between women living in poverty and the policies, actions, and inactions of the federal government. With over 2.4 million women living poverty, women form the majority of the poor in Canada. CRIAW calls for reforms in child care and pay equity, recognition of the importance of unpaid work, and the development of more options for affordable housing.

CRIAW works from an intersectional feminist framework, promoting the idea that class, race, language, ability, Aboriginal status, sexual orientation, nationality, and family situation, among

others, need to be considered in all feminist research and action. In this area, CRIAW works to draw attention to issues that impact racialized, immigrant, queer, Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit women, and women with disabilities.

CRIAW's dedicated members and partners, particularly those in the labour movement, understand the necessity of keeping CRIAW strong. Harper's attempt to repress feminist research and advocacy has only strengthened CRIAW's commitment to enhance the force of feminist voices.

How you can support CRIAW

Become a member! As a CRIAW member, you will receive the CRIAW e-newsletter, fact sheets, and policy papers.

Make use of and share CRIAW's feminist publications, available at criaw-icref.ca/publications.

The Harper government has not stopped CRIAW from documenting the economic and social situation of women in Canada. Although CRIAW's future remains uncertain, its drive to provide Canadians with feminist research has been reignited. ⑤

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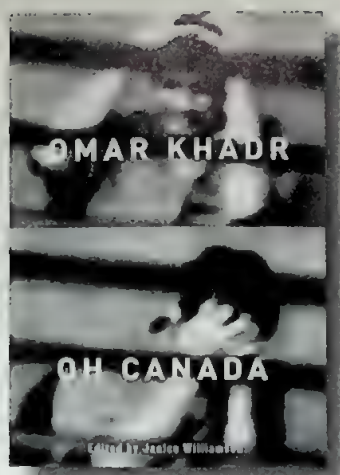
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Omar Khadr, Oh Canada

Edited by Janice Williamson
McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012

Reviewed by Fathima Cader

After a decade of captivity, Omar Khadr, the first child ever convicted of a war crime, became the last Western citizen to be repatriated out of Guantanamo Bay. *Omar Khadr, Oh Canada*, edited by Janice Williamson, is an anthology of creative and academic pieces about his detention.

Its cover features stills of a distraught teenager in a prison jumpsuit taken from a video of three Canadian Security Intelligence Service officials interrogating Khadr in Guantanamo. While such images supply crucial evidence of abuse (as with Abu Ghraib), their ubiquity is unsettling as they also remind marginalized communities of the violence with which they are uniquely threatened.

Patricio Henriquez's thoughtful examination of the interrogation footage is one the anthology's greatest strengths. Henriquez and Luc Côté turned the footage into the documentary *You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days inside Guantánamo*. The anthology's excerpts from the screenplay provide the text of the interrogation. Khadr's responses demonstrate, as Henriquez puts it, a "tremendous intellectual resistance," thus disrupting reductions of Khadr, reluctant synecdoche for Muslims, into an icon of despair.

Another key strength is the anthology's inclusion of three legal documents in full. The 2004 U.S. Department of Defense memorandum, which recom-

mended 15-year-old Khadr's continued detention at Guantanamo and described him as "in good health," is followed by Khadr's 2008 affidavit to the Federal Court of Canada in which he details severe injuries sustained during his 2002 capture, his torture at Bagram by U.S. Army Sergeant Joshua Claus (who would later be convicted for, among other things, the murder of two Afghani civilians there), and his torture at Guantanamo. "Besides my medical problems," Khadr concludes, "the dreams are the worst right now." The 2010 plea bargain provides the text of Khadr's first confession of guilt. As the anthology's many legal scholars scathingly recount, the U.S. and Canada

The domestication of Khadr's incarceration may make it dangerously easy to forget him.

(in Republican and Democratic, Liberal and Conservative iterations) continue to keep most information regarding Khadr's capture and torture secret, rendering his legal proceedings farcical.

Notwithstanding its dissemination of primary legal material, the anthology remains over-reliant on the media for information. For instance, several contributors cite right-wing journalist

Stewart Bell, despite Sherene Razack's criticism of him in the conclusion of the book for perpetuating stereotypes of a Muslim psyche predisposed to violence.

Many contributors also describe – to the point of reinforcing – the "Khadr effect," the phenomenon where Khadr is punished for his parents' sins. The narrowness of this fixation forecloses meaningful analyses of the geopolitics that transformed al-Qaida in the popular imagination from U.S. ally to evil incarnate. Gar Pardy's essay on Khadr's family is a notable exception.

Using the human rights language common to liberal analysis of Khadr's case, a number of essays characterize Canada's complicity in the torture of this one child as an aberration. This belies Canada's foundational violences, which include the widespread detention and abuse of Aboriginal children.

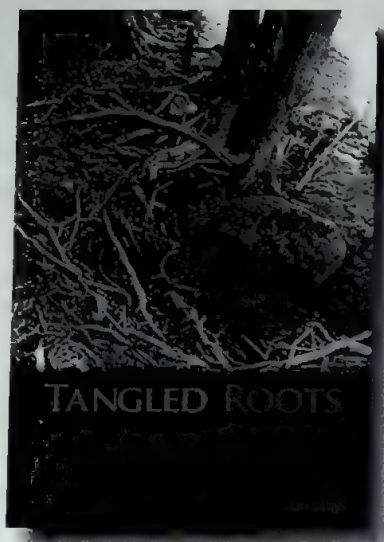
Several writers note that Khadr was among many children detained in Guantanamo. Marina Nemat describes how Guantanamo resembles Evin, the infamous Iranian prison in which she was detained at age 16. Monia Mazigh reminds us that the year of Khadr's plea bargain, U.S. President Barack Obama lifted prohibitions on military-related assistance to four countries known to use underage soldiers.

Writers also show how the post-9/11 "state of exception" has made unexceptional the surveillance, incarceration, and torture of Muslims. They outline

the cases of numerous Muslims who were detained abroad or deported from Canada on flimsy and often-withdrawn allegations of terrorism, and who did not receive the consular attention enjoyed by white Canadians in comparable positions. Alnoor Gova and Robert Diab advise that this inconsistency “contributes to a kind of psychological internment and social death” of Muslim communities in Canada.

Yet Shadia Drury, conflating Muslims with immigrants, argues immigrants are intent on turning Canada into something Ottoman-esque and thus have only themselves to blame for the collective guilt to which they are now being subject. Her essay, though a jarring inclusion in the collection, provides a cautionary example of how Islamophobia remains an issue in Khadr’s ongoing story.

This anthology is a helpful overview of how far the movement for justice for Khadr has come – and a reminder of how far it still has to go. One hundred and sixty-six people, all Muslim men and only six of whom face active charges, remain in Guantanamo while Khadr has been repatriated “home” to the maximum-security Millhaven Institution. The domestication of his incarceration may make it dangerously easy to forget him now since he joins a prison population whose disproportionate racialization, as Yasmin Jiwani points out in the book, is grossly normalized. The rate of incarceration of Aboriginal, black, and migrant women and men is worsening with the 2012 passage of draconian criminal laws. Thus, if campaigns for justice on Khadr’s behalf are to remain effective and thoughtful, they will have to move away from a rhetoric of exceptionalism regarding his case to a strategy of solidarity with communities already suffering the brunt of Canada’s law-and-order regime. ⑥



Tangled Roots: Dialogues Exploring Ecological Justice, Healing, and Decolonization

By Matt Soltys
Healing the Earth Press, 2012

Reviewed by Peter Hopperton

If those of us who care about the earth are to have a chance at actually stopping its destruction, we need to expand environmentalism way beyond its conventional boundaries,” says author and activist Matt Soltys, describing the focus of his new book, *Tangled Roots: Dialogues Exploring Ecological Justice, Healing, and Decolonization*. “We need to see how everything environmental is inextricable from power relations like race, class, gender, and colonialism.”

Tangled Roots is a collection of 12 interviews drawn from Healing the Earth Radio, a weekly radio show Soltys hosted in Guelph from 2005 to 2010, featuring the perspectives of a wide range of people taking up challenges posed by the ecological crisis. The book includes conversations with Ramona Africa of the black liberation group MOVE; peak-oil scholar Richard Heinberg; permaculturist Erik Ohlsen; and former political prisoner Jeffrey Luers, a member of the Earth Liberation Front. Chapters are introduced with full-page illustrations by Philippa Joly, each centred around a healing plant

whose properties speak to the issues discussed in the interview.

Whether the subject is Indigenous warrior societies, electromagnetic pollution, or the climate justice movement, Soltys encourages the interviewees to make connections across issues. The interviews progress through the themes in the book’s subtitle – ecological justice, healing, and decolonization. This progression, and the deep interconnection

“We need to expand environmentalism way beyond its conventional boundaries.”

of themes, challenges the reader to go beyond usual forms of engagement and ideological niches. The diversity of topics and ideas means each only gets brief atten-

tion, but the thorough endnotes offer background information and sources for learning more. This careful referencing is one of the book’s greatest strengths.

Tangled Roots is not an introductory book; it takes concepts like Indigenous sovereignty and the inherent value of biodiversity as starting points to be built from rather than theses to defend. Those already passionate about environmental and social issues will find many opportunities to challenge themselves to deepen their understanding. ⑥

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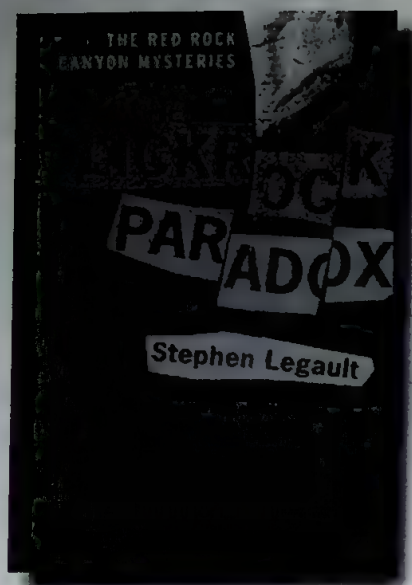
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The Slickrock Paradox

By Stephen Legault
Touchwood Editions, 2012

Reviewed by Yutaka Dirks

The *Slickrock Paradox*, by Alberta-based mystery author Stephen Legault, wraps its twisting plot around one central mystery. There are crimes for the protagonist to solve, including more than one murder, but they are almost peripheral; the core riddle is the absence of a body.

Silas Pearson, a former English professor in his 50s, spends his days wandering Arizona and Utah searching in vain for his wife. Three years earlier, Penelope de Silva, an intrepid environmentalist, left to go on a day hike and never returned. After another fruitless day of searching, a dream leads Silas to a body unearthed by a flash flood. But the skeletal remains are not those of Penelope; they belong to Kayah Wisechild, a young Native American woman. Soon Silas is embroiled in a mystery that reaches into the byzantine world of industrial development, big money, and state politics.

Legault's love of the land is palpable; the reader can clearly see the complicated beauty and compelling, fickle character of the rocky wilderness. Legault spent a year as a volunteer at Grand Canyon National Park and is an environmental advocate who has worked with several Canadian conservation organizations. It's a shame that the character at the centre of the book is not communicated as capably as the landscape. The author renders Silas' despair with skill but never gives breath to Penelope, reducing the impact of Silas' loss.

As the mystery deepens and both the body count and list of suspects mount, Silas is undeterred. He is convinced that solving the murder of Wisechild will help him find his wife, who may have been involved in clandestine conservation work. Silas finds unlikely allies in Katie Rain, an FBI forensic specialist, and Josh "Hayduke" Charleston, a young firebrand environmentalist who knew Penelope. Rain is sympathetic to Silas' search and quietly shares information with him. Hayduke offers a rougher, somewhat less-than-legal kind of support.

The name Hayduke is a reference to the anti-hero of Edward Abbey's seminal hard-boiled environmental thriller, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, which foresaw the rise of radical groups like Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front. In the 1980s, the founders of Earth First! borrowed Abbey's term "monkeywrenching" to describe the act of industrial sabotage in defence of the environment. Legault pays homage to Abbey throughout the book: Penelope based her desert explorations on Abbey's documented travels, and Silas searches his books for clues to her disappearance.

Unfortunately, Legault never addresses Abbey's reprehensible racism. In 1963, Abbey wrote: "I certainly do not wish to live in a society dominated by blacks, or Mexicans, or Orientals."

Just as insidious were Abbey's racist, colonial ideas about Indigenous peoples and their relationship to the land he fervently defended. Midway through *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the gang destroys a coal train and plants false leads around the site to point the blame at Red Power radicals. Indigenous people don't have a place in Abbey's narrative of eco-resistance, even if it is their traditional lands that are being destroyed.

Sadly, although Legault's plot turns on the discovery of the ruins of a Pueblo gathering place by a young Hopi woman, *The Slickrock Paradox* suffers from a similar, though less crass, erasure. Despite his realistic portrayal of the political and economic landscape of the Southwest, the role of Native Americans in the defence of their land and water

rights goes unmentioned, and Legault's few Indigenous characters are treated as objects more than actors: victim, grieving sibling, spiritual Elder.

**Legault's love
of the land
is palpable.**

The Slickrock Paradox is the first book in a promised series of mystery novels featuring the reluctant detective who still has the mystery of his missing wife to unravel. Hopefully in the next book Legault will build upon what works – lushly described settings and a few genuinely suspenseful scenes – fix those things that need some tinkering, and bury what's broken. **B**

QUOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND



"There is almost no kind of outrage – torture...imprisonment without trial, assassination, the bombing of civilians... which does not change its moral colour when it is committed by 'our' side...The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, he has a remarkable capacity for not hearing about them."

GEORGE ORWELL

"Whoever was tortured, stays tortured."

JEAN AMÉRY

"It is sometimes said that it is right to torture a man if his confession can save a hundred lives...The majority of the tortured say nothing because they have nothing to say unless, to avoid torture, they agree to bear false witness or confess to a crime they have not committed."

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

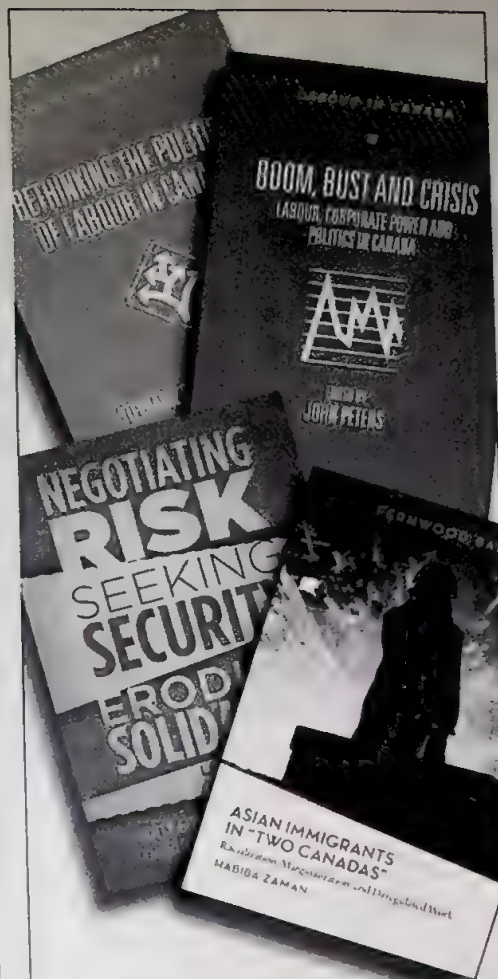
"No modern regime or society is more secure as a result of torture. Its use spreads, its harms multiply, and its corrosive consequences boost rather than diminish the threat of terrorism."

LISA HAJJAR

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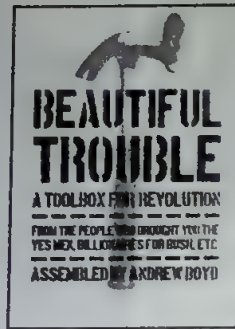
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SUSTAINER PROFILE #18:

Rebekah Seidel



Community development worker Rebekah Seidel comes by her social justice work honestly, having been raised in a leftist family in Rimbey, Alta., where she currently resides in an old farmhouse with her teenage son. Her belief in the power of community is informed by her time living and working in Nicaragua in the 1980s following the Sandinista revolution.

What's it like being a radical in rural Alberta?

Not all rural Albertans (or rural/small-town people for that matter) are conservative. I currently live in the small community where I grew up, after decades of working overseas, and there is actually a lot of social action here. We need to remember that many social programs in Canada were formulated by farm women around kitchen tables in rural Prairie communities.

What do you do for fun?

I love gardening in the summer and cross-country skiing in the winter. My chickens remind me of the simpler things in life. (They are particularly happy chickens as they know I'm vegetarian.)

What's your favourite book?

Currently, it's *Something Fierce* by Carmen Aguirre. It resonates with my work in the Central America solidarity movements of the 1980s.

How long have you been reading *Briarpatch*?

Off and on for a long time. Every time I come back to Canada after living and working overseas, I look it up again. I am now a sustainer and plan to stop "dating" *Briarpatch*. I'm making a long-term commitment, regardless of where I am living!

What's the best part about life in Rimbey?

As a single mom, I find the kind of support I need is readily available in a small community, whether it be a neighbour plowing my driveway in the winter, a family who will look after my son when I travel for work, or teenagers who will stay and look after our dogs, cats, and chickens when we are away overnight.

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From abortion rights to reproductive justice

By Bianca Mugenyi



It's been nearly 25 years since the Supreme Court decriminalized abortion in Canada, but the dust has yet to settle on Parliament Hill.

While Stephen Harper has repeatedly affirmed he will not reopen the abortion debate, eight private member's bills challenging abortion access and rights have been introduced under his tenure. Conservative MP Stephen Woodworth took a swing in March 2012 with the submission of Motion 312, which obliged a Commons committee to study the sections of the Criminal Code that determine when a fetus becomes a person under the law.

The proposed motion was shot down 203-91 in September. Pro-choice spectators were relieved by the motion's defeat but also outraged by the position of Rona Ambrose, Minister for the Status of Women, who voted in favour of the motion and cited concerns about discrimination against girls through selective abortions.

Organizations such as Fédération des Femmes du Québec and the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC) demanded Ambrose's immediate resignation, and a petition calling for the minister to step down amassed over 6,000 signatures within 24 hours.

"Let's be clear: the anti-choice movement hoped this motion would be their ticket to recriminalizing abortion," said Joyce Arthur, executive director of ARCC. "Not only did Ambrose openly defy her prime minister's instruction to his cabinet to vote against the motion, she threw women under the bus."

Motion 312 is one of 45 anti-choice bills or motions submitted to Parliament since 1987. Others include Bill C-338, reintroduced in 2007 with the goal of criminalizing abortions after 20 weeks of gestation, and Bill C-484, the Unborn Victims of Crime Act, aimed at protecting fetuses from "third party attacks," which passed a second reading in the spring of 2008.

Since the defeat of Motion 312, Conservative MPs have filed no less than 20 petitions concerning abortion. The anti-abortion movement has been trying to reframe the discussion from morality and religion to legal protections or "human rights" for the fetus. Rather than emphasizing the values of social conservatives, they point to restrictions around abortion access in social democracies like France and Sweden.

Despite a growing parliamentary anti-abortion caucus, every legal challenge to decriminalization has failed. In a 2010 EKOS poll, 52 per cent of Canadians considered themselves pro-choice, with 27 per cent identifying as pro-life.

While the anti-abortion movement has won neither popular support nor gains in court, its biggest victories may be overseas, where few Canadians extend their gaze. In 2010, Harper denied funding to the International Planned Parenthood Federation and refused to include abortion in the G8-G20 maternal health initiative, at a time when five million women are hospitalized for unsafe abortions every year and nearly 70,000 die every year from botched abortions. With the majority of Conservative MPs holding anti-abortion positions, many interpreted this as a nod to Harper's socially conservative base.

In Canada, availability of abortion facilities varies across the country, with greater access in cities than rural areas. Only one in six hospitals in Canada offers abortion services. There are no northern facilities in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, and only one hospital north of the Trans-Canada Highway in Ontario offers abortion services. While the Canada Health Act requires provinces to fund abortion clinics, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick do not contribute. P.E.I. is without any abortion facilities whatsoever. This has prompted the formation of Halifax-based Maritime Abortion Support Services, a group of 20 volunteers who provide information, transportation, and accompaniment for Maritimers seeking abortions.

Sectors of the pro-choice movement are presently pushing for improvements to reproductive rights across the board, calling for improved access to sex education and contraceptives, as well as empowering options for those who choose to have children.

The reproductive justice movement, which emerged from groups representing women of colour and Indigenous women, has gone further by addressing inequalities in access, advocating for health service provision to traditionally marginalized communities. Atlanta-based SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective is one such group. Their co-founder, Loretta Ross, spoke at Concordia University in Montreal this past fall and relayed the story of her forced sterilization at the age of 23.

"Reproductive violence happens when people are unable to control their own fertility," explained Ross, who elaborated on an approach to reproductive rights that is not separate from immigrant, Indigenous, or labour rights, and seeks to leave no one behind.

"It's not just about the right to have a child or not have a child," Ross summarized. "We also have to fight for the right to raise our children in safe and healthy environments." **B**



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